THE

Ladies Choice:

A

POEM.

LONDON

Printed, and Sold by *J. How*, and *B. Bragg*, at the *Blew-Ball* in *Avemary-Lane*, next *Ludgate-Street*, 1702.

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Meliſſa Belinda.

Meliſſa. *PRithee, Belinda (for thou know'ſt I'm Young,*
Unskill'd in Arts that to our Sex belong)
Thy wiſer Counſels to my Youth impart;
Teach me at once to Love, *and* Guard *my Heart:*
That I have Wit, *can* Sing *and* Dance *you know,*
And the Men tell me I am Pretty too;
I now have Fifteen pleaſing Summers ſeen,
And have been Courted by twice Fifteen Men;
Still freſh Pretenders do my Peace Invade,
They Write, *they* Viſit, Sigh *and* Serenade,
And try allways to Catch a Harmleſs Maid.

Then ſince our Virgin Thoughts are apt to Rove,
And few eſcape that Noble Paſſion Love,

Teach me, Belinda, *by thy Arts to Chuſe*
What Suiters to Admit, and which Refuſe.

Belinda.

Meliſſa, I am glad you're ſo Diſcreet,
For, that to more Experience you'll ſubmit,
Argues your want of *Vanity*, not *Wit*.

And yet, my Dear, 'tis difficult t' Adviſe,
Fools are ſo Plenty, and ſo Scarce the *Wiſe*:
To judge of Men, we ſhou'd not Truſt our Eyes;
Outward Appearance may Delude the Sight;
Nor is it good to gaze too near the Light:
For tho' your *Beauty*, like a Painted Scene,
May Dang'rous prove to the Vile Race of Men,
Who at the greater diſtance do Admire,
And ſhun the heat of Love's Important Fire.
Whoſe *Little God*, like leſſer Thieves, unſeen,
Steals to our Hearts, we ſcarce know how or when,
His *Standard* hoiſts and Guards the Fort within;
Then like a Tyrant does our Peace Controul,
And abſolutely Lords it o'er the Soul:
Thus, with your *Heart*, your *Fortune* he'll Diſpoſe:
He does the *Man*, you but the *Husband* chuſe.

And tho' a *Fool*, you muſt the *Wretch* receive;
For where we *Love*, we ſoon our Perſons give.

Therefore, *Meliſſa*, wiſely Guard your Heart;
What *Nature* won't defend, defend by *Art*:

Shun, I adviſe you, moſt Devoutly ſhun,
Thoſe *Servile Apes* that ſwarm about the Town;
Pert, *Noiſie Coxcombs*, *Self-admiring Beaux*,
Known by their *want* of *Wit*, and *Gaudy Cloaths*:

Of all the Creatures Nature does provide,
To ſtock the World from *Ignorance* to *Pride*;
Of all that from her various Boſom ſpring,
A *Beau* I think the oddeſt kind of thing;
A ſelfiſh Compound, ſingular, and Vain,
Half *Aſs*, half *Puppet*, and the leaſt of *Man*;
One that ſeems juſt for Nature's Paſtime made,
A *Gawdy* Carcaſs, with an *Empty Head*;
Whoſe only *Knowledge* lies in *modiſh Dreſs*,
And ſeldom looks much further than his Glaſs.
A Creature only Govern'd by his Will;
And never *Reads* above a *Taylors Bill*;
A Wretch extreamly *Whimſical* and *Proud*,
Stiff in *Opinion*, *Talkative* and *Loud*;
And that which moſt Compleatly Arms the *Fool*,
Is, That the *Fop's* Emphatically dull.

That ſuch, *Meliſſa*, may Addreſs, 'tis true,
Write a ſoft *Song*, or ſenſeleſs *Billetdoux*,
But 'tis *Themſelves* they *Admire* in't, not *You*:
And ſhe that's baſely Yok'd with one of theſe,
Muſt e'en be Wedded to his *Vanities*;
Doat on a *Thing* that ſcarce deſerves a Name,
While he with *Slights* rewards her Vertuous Flame:
For tell me, can he leſs *Indifferent* prove,
Who thinks no Woman can Deſerve his Love?
No, no, *Meliſſa*, never think he can;
For if you do, you're Cozen'd in your Man.

Self-Affectation ſways his little Senſe;
Nought but *Himſelf* he Loves, and *Ignorance*.
By fatal Chance, if ſuch a Man you Wed,
Better, *Meliſſa*, thou had'ſt Dy'd a Maid:
Ev'n ſuch a Lover, were a Plague too great;
From ſuch a Husband, Guard me, Oh my Fate!

Shun too, my Dear, the *Lewder Wits* o'th' Town,
As watchfully as they'd avoid a Dun.
For ſuch a Man too ſoon wou'd let you ſee,
Lewdneſs and *Marriage* do but ill Agree.
Oft at the Theatre ſuch Sparks I've ſeen,
With *Rakiſh Looks*, *half Drunk*, come Reeling in;
Toſſing their *Wigs*, their *Backs* againſt the Scene.

Regardleſs of the Play (a Mark of Wit)
Bow to ſome Lewd Companion in the Pit.
Take Snuff, fling round, in the Side-Box be ſeen,
Whiſper a Mask, and then Retire again,
To ſome Lov'd *Tavern*, where's their chief Delight,
There in Debaucheries they ſpend the Night,
Then Stagger homeward by the Morning Light.

Thus the Extravagant ſquanders his Eſtate,
Scarce e'er Conſid'ring till it be too late:
And then a *Wife* muſt Cure the dang'rous Sore;
A *Fortune* too, his *Acres* muſt Reſtore;
The Woman Found, is by Addreſſes won;
They're *married*: He's *profuſe*, and ſhe's *undone*.
The Wound once heal'd, he ſoon forgets the Pain,
And takes the Trade of *Lewdneſs* up again:
In Vicious Days and Nights his Life is ſpent;
The *Pleaſure* his, but her's the *Puniſhment*;
For now the Heav'n ſhe Dreamt of, proves her Hell,
Whoſe only *Fault* was Loving him too well.
Penſive all Day ſhe ſits; all Night alone;
She does her ſlighted Love, but more his Loſs bemoan,
By kind Endearments Fraught with Innocence,
She ſtrives to ſoften his Impenitence;
Fain wou'd ſhe turn him from the winding Maze,
Win him to Love, and be the ſame he was;

But Vain her Sighs; her Prayers, her Tears are Vain,
She might as ſoon her *Freedom* re-obtain,
As think to Mollifie th' obdurate Man.
Who like her Perſon, ſlights the fond Advice,
And when with Love ſhe wou'd his Soul Entice,
Flies from her Arms, and Revels in his Vice;
Till ſhe, alas, foreſeeing what muſt come,
Conſents, and with the little left he packs her home.

Of ſuch I give thee Caution to beware,
Fly 'em, *Meliſſa*, like a Tim'rous Hare,
That Strains along the Vales t' avoid the Hunters Snare.

And from a Soldier too, thy flight direct;
In his Rough Arms, what can a Maid expect;
Long Abſent days, and tedious Widow'd Nights:
Are thoſe the Marriage Joys, the vaſts Delights
We promiſe to our ſelves, with him we Love?
Or ſhall we elſe ſuch Conſtant Creatures prove,
To leave our Country, and turn Fugitive:
Follow the Camp, and with the Wanderer Live.
'Mongſt War-like ſounds our ſofter hours to paſs,
Scorch in the Sun, and Sleep upon the Graſs:
No, no, *Meliſſa*, 'tis an Auxious Life;
Honour's his Miſtreſs; let it be his Wife.

No Man of Bus'neſs let thy Heart approve;
Bus'neſs is oft an Enemy to Love:
Nor think, my Dear, thou canſt be truly bleſt
With one that's *Wedded* to his Intereſt.
Worldly Affairs does his Affections cloy,
As that which ſhou'd preſerve it, does deſtroy.
'Twixt two Extreams you wretchedly muſt Live;
Or bad, or worſe, as his Affairs do Thrive;
Whoſe good or ill Succeſs, muſt be the Rule,
One makes him Inſolent, and t'other Dull.

Let no Aſpiring Courtier be thy Choice;
Avoid in Courts, the Buſtle and the Noiſe;
Where Vain *Ambition* hurries on the Mind,
And always leaves more ſolid Joys behind:
As when the *Thrifty Clown*, ſecurely Bleſt,
His *Barns* with *Plenty*, with *Content* his *Breſt*,
Poſſeſt with hopes of a long loſt Eſtate,
In haſte forſakes his humble harmleſs Seat.
With Bagg and Bundle, Trots it up to Town,
There wildly Gapes, and wanders up and down,
And's kept in *Ignorance* till he's undone.
Some weighty Sums receiv'd for *Corn* and *Cheeſe*,
Are *Spent* in *Treats*, and *Giv'n* away in *Fees*.

Mean while the *Lawyer* ſo well Acts his Part,
With empty Pockets, and an Aking Heart,
He ſends him home again to Plow and Cart.

So the *Gay Youth* does Laviſh his Eſtate,
And bribes into the Favour of the *Great*;
Prefer'd he ſits like Fortunes Darling Son,
To's Friends, and what he was, a Stranger grown;
Till ſoon ſome turn of a Revolving State,
Leaves him to Curſe *Ambition*, and his Fate;
Threaten'd with Want, perhaps the Youngſter Writes,
And Lives (or rather Starves Genteely) by his Wits.

Therefore, *Meliſſa*, Guard thee from ſurprize;
Let none of theſe betray thee, if thou'rt Wiſe;
Let not their Songs, nor Sighs, thy Soul Entice.
But if thou wou'dſt be happy in thy Choice,
Above 'em all, a Gentleman prefer;
One free from Bus'neſs, undiſturb'd with Care;
Yet in the Publick Good (without Vile ends)
To ſerve his Country, and his Countries Friends:
Travel his Underſtanding ſhou'd improve;
For as it helps his Knowledge, 'twould his Love.
As to his Perſon, 'tis not to adviſe;
All Women ſee not with the ſelf-ſame Eyes.

In that you might your own Opinion uſe,
Your Heart wou'd teach you; but were I to chuſe,
He ſhou'd not be Effeminate or Proud,
(I hate the Man that is by Pride ſubdu'd,
In us I Grant a little Pride may be,
Much leſs a Crime (and may with Senſe agree)
A Gift alone for our own Sex deſign'd,
To awe the looſe Opinions of Mankind;
Who quickly elſe more Inſolent wou'd grow:
'Tis Vertue's Guard, and Aids our Beauties too.

A Gay Appearance ſhou'd not make me err;
I wou'd the Beauties of the Mind prefer.
Among the Few, I'd have a Man of Senſe,
Endu'd with Modeſty and Temperance;
Not with a great, and yet a good Eſtate;
Not too much Learning, nor Illiterate,
And yet he ſhou'd (avoiding each extream)
Know more of Man, than Man ſhou'd know of him.
Be Gen'rous and Well-bred, but not Profuſe;
Not giv'n to Flattery, nor to take th' Abuſe:
Gentile his Carriage, and his Humour ſuch,
Shou'd ſpeak him Sociable, but no Debauch.
A Lover of his Country, and a Friend to Wit,
Read *Poetry* he ſhou'd, but ſhou'd not write;

His Temper Lively, not to *Wildneſs* bent,
His Talk Diverting, and yet Innocent;
Not Unreſerv'd, nor yet too Nicely Wiſe,
Apter to Bear, than Offer Injuries;
Courage enough his Honour to defend,
But Conſtant in his Love, and Faithful to his Friend.

This is the Man I'd to my Heart prefer;
Such Men, *Meliſſa*, well deſerve our Care;
You'll ſay they're Scarce, and I muſt grant they are.
Yet I reſolve by ſuch a Man, or none,
(Unleſs by Love betray'd) I will be won.

But were I Woo'd by the *Embelliſh'd Youth*;
His Soul ſuſceptible of Love and Truth:
By eaſie ſteps he ſhou'd attain my Heart,
By all the Proofs of Breeding, Wit, and Art.
Then like ſome Town, by *War-like Numbers* ſought,
That long againſt its Enemies has fought,
And oft with Courage brav'd the *ſhining Field*,
Yet in the end by Want or Force compell'd,
It does with Honour to the *Conqueror* Yield.
So to my Lover I'd my Heart reſign,
The Conqueſt his, the Glory ſhould be mine.

With mutual Love my Nuptials ſhou'd be Bleſt,
Then to my Arms I'd call the Welcome Gueſt,
And Celebrate with Joy great *Hymen*'s Feaſt.

Marriage is Bondage; but where *Cupid* Reigns,
The Yoke is eaſie; Glorious are the Chains:
His Fetters pleaſe, nor wiſh we to be Free,
But Glory in the Loſs of Liberty:
And yet but half our Thanks we owe the Boy,
He gives us Love, 'tis *Hymen* gives us Joy;
Well might the Poets feign thoſe Gods a-kin,
For we are only Happy where they join.
As when *Aurora* does the Bridal Morn,
With an uncommon Gayety Adorn
From its Illuſtrious Pride with eaſe we may
Foretel the Brightneſs of the coming Day:
So when true Love the Sacred Tye precedes,
Secure of Happineſs that Couple weds;
No Threat'ning Storms do e'er Moleſt their Joy,
Nor Anxious Quarrels do their Peace deſtroy;
Their days ſlide on in the ſecureſt eaſe,
And Circle in Eternal Rounds of Bliſs,

Bleſt in my VViſh thus far, my next ſhould be,
(For I *Meliſſa*, wou'd live far and free
From the vile Tumults of this viler Town)
To have ſome little Cottage of my own;
No *Spacious*, but a *Pleaſant* Country Seat,
VVhere the Gay Spring ſhou'd ſmile on our Retreat;
Delightful Gardens ſhou'd the Structure Bound,
All *Love* within, and *Innocence* around;
Adorn'd with Fruit-Trees curious to the Eye,
VVith ſtreaming Fountains, and a River nigh;
VVhere, low-grown VVillows do recline their head,
And o'er its fall their Meeting Branches ſpread,
As tho' they were by careful Nature hung,
To liſten and regard its Murm'ring Song,
VVhoſe Silver current as it glides along;
Does waſh the Bank of ſome Delightful Grove,
Fragrant beneath, and ſhaded all above;
VVhere the freſh Seaſons breathe their vital Air,
And pretty Birds with untaught Songs repair;
VVhere ſpreading Pines, and taller Poplars grow,
Young Elms that do a pleaſing Proſpect ſhow.

VVhere

Where Bow'rs of Yew, and twiſted Hazles ſtand,
With cluſter'd Filberts to invite the hand;
A Place by Nature fram'd to feaſt the Mind,
By Art for Solitude and Love deſign'd;
Where we wou'd walk, and waſte our idler hours,
Gather the luſcious Fruits and various Flowers,
Crop from their ſtalks the Columbine and Roſe,
And from its Branch, the juicy Peach unloſe,
And ev'ry Sweet of Nature ſhould it ſelf diſcloſe.

So the firſt Pair, of Innocence poſſeſt,
Were in their Native *EDEN* truly Bleſt;
At large they rang'd o'er all the flow'ry Land,
And pluck'd their Food from Nature's lib'ral Hand:
Tripp'd o'er the Soil, and to the Fountains ran,
The Happy VVoman *She*, and *He* the Happy Man.

Next in my Family I'd employ my Care,
My Attendance few, but honeſt and ſincere;
I wou'd not have our happier Delights,
Deſtroy'd by Gaming Days, or Drinking Nights.
Nor yet look ſhye upon thoſe Friends he brought,
I wou'd ſeem Pleaſant, tho' I lik'd them not:

Courteous to all, and Lib'ral to the Poor,
They ſtill ſhou'd chant their Bleſſings at my Door;
From whence diſſatisfy'd they ſhou'd not go,
Leſt Heaven ſhou'd retrench its Bounty too;
No Jars among my Servants ſhou'd be found,
But Chains of laſting Peace ſhou'd ſtill run round.

Thus we'd the Innocence of Life enjoy,
For Love's a Beauty which does ſeldom cloy.
As Peaceful Monarchs do their Kingdoms Sway,
He ſhou'd my Heart, and I'd in Love obey;
No change of Fortune ſhou'd pervert our Flame,
But with the good or bad, be ſtill the ſame.